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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research project was to examine the current state of libraries in the Solomon Islands with particular attention to the resources available and the services provided. Data was collected through a survey questionnaire, site visits, and informal interviews carried out in the Solomon Islands between July and August 1998. The 20 libraries that responded to the questionnaire included 1 national, 2 academic, 3 public and provincial, 4 school, and 10 special libraries. The major findings reveal problems in library and information services provision to local communities. These problems are not unique to Solomon Islands but are common to many developing countries. Library service is hampered by a general lack of library resources, a serious shortage of qualified librarians, insufficient funding, a lack of cooperation between libraries, and a lack of commitment to and recognition of libraries by responsible authorities including the Government. There is also a lack of awareness of the services provided by the libraries and of the importance of librarianship as a profession. This research concludes with discussion on the roots of the problems and ways in which these problems could be overcome to lead to improving the standard of libraries and librarianship in the Solomon Islands. Appendices include the survey questionnaire, letters to libraries, and list of participating libraries. (Author/AEF)

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ED 445 696

Loughborough University

The state of libraries in Solomon Islands in the 1990s

by

Tony Dadalo, Cert.Lib., Dip.LIS (USP)

This project is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Bachelor of Arts (Hons) degree of Loughborough University

April 1999

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Supervisor: Dr R. P. Sturges, B.A., M.A., Ph.D., M.I. Inf. Sc.
Department of Information Science

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Abstract

There were two important considerations which led to this piece of academic research. First and foremost, there is the opinion that little advancement has taken place in Solomon Islands librarianship since the country was a British Protectorate. Secondly, there was a notable lack of research in this area, and thus this piece of work will contribute to the library literature of Solomon Islands.

The project aimed to find out about the current state of libraries in Solomon Islands with particular attention to the resources available and the services provided. This was achieved through a questionnaire survey, site visits and informal interviews carried out in Solomon Islands between July and August 1998. Twenty libraries representing the different types of libraries that exist in Solomon Islands participated in the survey.

The research uncovered many interesting findings. The major findings reveal a library service faced with problems in an attempt to provide library and information services to the local communities. These problems are not unique to Solomon Islands but are common to many developing countries. The service is hampered by a general lack of library resources, a serious shortage of qualified librarians, insufficient funding, a lack of co-operation between libraries, and a lack of commitment and recognition of libraries by responsible authorities including the Government. There is also a lack of awareness of the services provided by the libraries and of the importance of librarianship as a profession. A professional library association which could lobby appropriate parties would help to overcome some of these obstacles.

The dissertation ends with a series of conclusions on the roots of the problems and ways in which these problems could be overcome in order to lead to an improvement in the standard of libraries and librarianship in Solomon Islands.

Acknowledgements

It is with much pleasure that I would like to thank all those who assisted and supported me one way or another during the course of this project. While it is impossible to single out all the many individuals whose help, support and encouragement have led to the fruition of this report, special mention must be made of the following.

I am particularly thankful to my supervisor, Dr Paul Sturges, for his professional guidance and enthusiasm throughout the project.

Many thanks go to the libraries that participated in the questionnaire survey, in particular the librarians who kindly and generously offered their invaluable information for this project. I guaranteed anonymity to all the librarians and therefore cannot thank them by name, however, I offer my thanks to all of them.

I wish to express my profound gratitude to the University of the South Pacific (USP) not only for providing the financial assistance which enabled me to undertake my survey and research in Solomon Islands, but also for providing the scholarship which enabled me to study at Loughborough University in the first place. Being my employer as well as my sponsor, USP has been very supportive in many ways. I am also grateful to Mereani Vakasisikakala, the librarian at the Pacific Collection of USP Library for her help with my requests for materials held at USP Library. Still at USP Library, I would also like to thank Jayshree Mamtora and Melvyn Rainey for their comments and encouragement.

I am also indebted to the USP Solomon Islands Centre for the use of its facilities during the period of my survey, in particular I would like to thank the Centre Director, Julian Treadaway, for his support for the project and for writing to the libraries requesting that they support me with my project. I extend my appreciation to all my other USP Centre colleagues for a very warmth and welcoming manner with which I was treated during the time of the survey.

Special thanks go to all my supportive friends, in particular, I am indebted to Gerald Brown of Canada for his constant encouragement, support and interest in my project, and from whom I received some very useful advice. A former colleague, Peter Murgatroyd, also deserves my special thanks for his comments.

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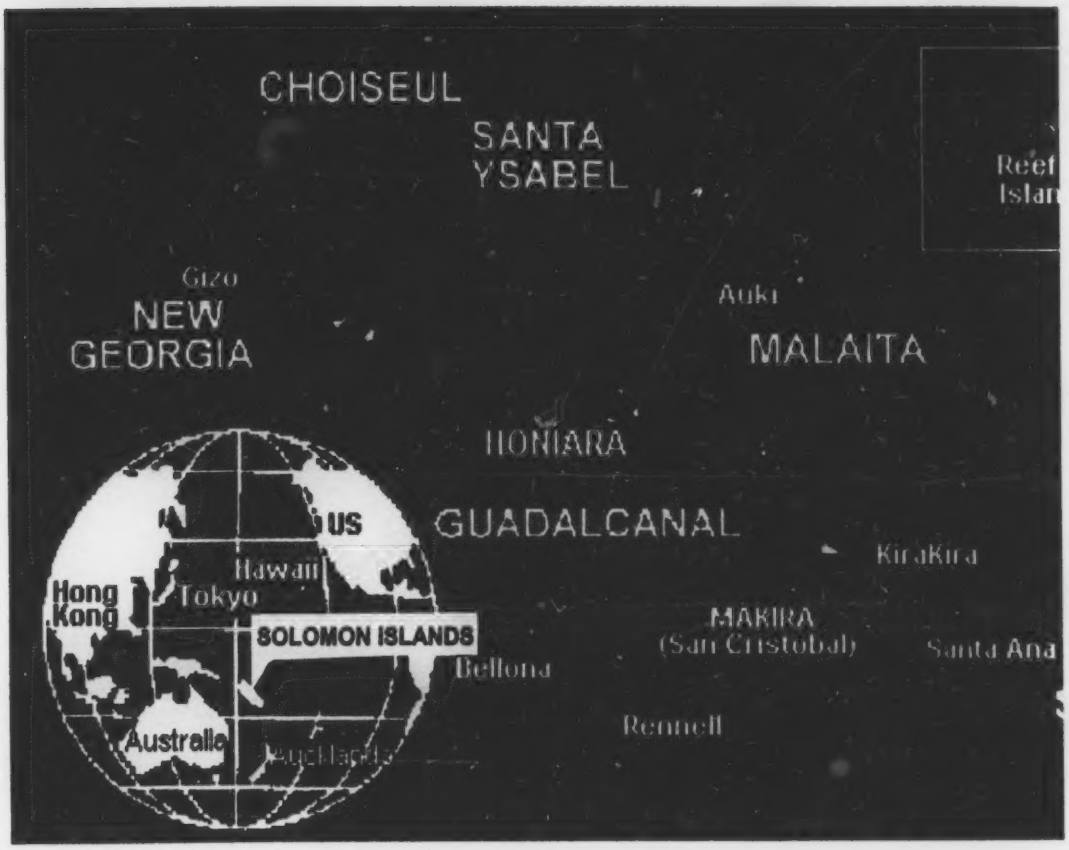
Acronyms

Acronyms used in the text.

CBSI	Central Bank of Solomon Islands
FFA	Forum Fisheries Agency
NLS	National Library service
OPAC	Online Public Access Catalogue
SIBC	Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation
SIC	Solomon Islands Collection
SICHE	Solomon Islands College of Higher Education
UPNG	University of Papua New Guinea
USP	University of the South Pacific

SOLOMON ISLANDS



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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

1.1 Background

Generally, libraries in Solomon Islands, in common with those in many other developing countries, have experienced unsteady development since the first ones were set up in the late 1960s. They are still struggling in their attempt to provide basic library and information services to their communities. A general opinion is that little advancement has been made in Solomon Islands librarianship since the country was a British Protectorate. It was as a result of this opinion that this research was initiated. The basic objective of this research was to investigate the present day libraries, find out what resources they have, the services they provide and see whether or not these findings substantiate the above opinion. From this, a conclusion could be drawn on the current state of library and information service in the county.

This report presents the findings of the research carried out between July and August 1998. It is hoped that it will prove a valuable contribution to the development of library and information services in Solomon Islands and that it will stimulate further discussion and development.

First-hand information and facts for the research were obtained from a questionnaire that was distributed to libraries. Additional information was obtained from site visits, observations, informal conversations with various people inside and outside of the field.

I also relied much upon my personal knowledge and experience of the local library situation gained from having worked in the field for twelve years prior to taking up my studies at Loughborough University.

As far as research into libraries in Solomon Islands is concerned, this project was probably the first major research to be undertaken involving a majority of the actively functioning libraries. It covered the different types of libraries that exist in the country. Undoubtedly, it is a very useful piece of research not only to those who use libraries in Solomon Islands but the citizens of the country as a whole. Whilst it is a fresh and significant contribution to the library literature of Solomon Islands, it will be of significant importance to other librarians, their authorities and the Government in their decision making processes. It will enable them to see the strengths and weaknesses of the library and information services in the country and thereby, I hope, convince them to make informed decisions on libraries.

1.2 Reasons for research

In addition to the requirement of the final year undergraduate study programme, there are other significant reasons for the choice of this project. First and of paramount importance, I hope this publication will be useful to other people in Solomon Islands such as librarians and their authorities, students, academics, researchers and the Government.

The fact that this is the first substantial research into this area, let alone carried out by a local Solomon Islander, says a lot about its significance and usefulness. Having a local person carry out the research obviously makes it unique. Not only does it enable the findings to be presented from a local's perspective, but most importantly, it promises a fair balance of judgement on the situation. It is intended to be useful because it is quite obvious that there is a lack of much needed research in this area. Furthermore, it is useful because it might encourage other people to think about the same problems, as well as thinking about ways of handling them in order to improve the overall library and information services in the country.

Secondly, the decision was purely a personal aim, or a dream come true, to produce a publication that would contribute to the library literature on Solomon Islands.

Thirdly, this piece of research could be the basis for further research. This is likely because it provides a general outlook of libraries in Solomon Islands. To do research, it is always helpful to have something broad as a basis and there was a good reason for being broad with this research because of the lack of previous work. Again, the need for research of this nature cannot be emphasised enough.

Finally, and perhaps most significantly, is the benefit I have gained from the project personally. It has provided me with the opportunity to undertake a real piece of research from which I have learned a great deal. This will be a major asset when I get back into the field. Another major positive outcome, which will perhaps be shared by the readers

of this report, is the information obtained from the whole project; the knowledge of the current situation faced by libraries and librarianship in Solomon Islands.

1.3 Aims and objectives

The overall aim of this research was to find out the current state of libraries in Solomon Islands. To meet this aim, the research set out to:

- find out what libraries exist in Solomon Islands;
- collect information and statistics on the following:

  - The resources that are available in the different libraries;
  - The quality of library and information services offered by the libraries;
  - Who uses the libraries in Solomon Islands;
  - For what purposes people use the libraries.

1.4 Funding assistance for the Project

As part of a scholarship award the University of the South Pacific provided for me to undertake my undergraduate degree, funds were made available to enable this research to be carried out in Solomon Islands.

1.5 Limitations

There are several limitations to this research. Firstly, due to the relatively short timescale available to undertake the research, it was inevitable that a sample rather than the whole population of libraries would be chosen to participate in the questionnaire survey. This meant that only the actively functioning ones were surveyed. Inevitably, the less active ones, primary school libraries and small collections which people tend to call a 'library' were excluded.

Secondly, due to circumstances over which there was no control, not all of the targeted libraries were covered in the survey. Several libraries that I had intended to include in the survey were closed during the survey period. Their closure was mainly due to financial and staffing difficulties. In addition, the inevitable non-response by several remote libraries has affected the statistics available for public and provincial libraries.

Third, but by no means least, the limited amount of literature published on Solomon Islands libraries meant that very limited information is available on the history of Solomon Islands libraries for comparison purposes. Therefore, for background information, I have relied much upon three articles written by Peter Williams, published in the journal *Focus* and the *Fiji Library Association Journal*, reports by former library advisers and other articles on libraries in Papua New Guinea and Fiji; two other Melanesian countries which have many similarities, problems and close links.

1.6 Outline of Report

Chapter Two provides brief historical background information on the country and the development of libraries.

Chapter Three looks at the methodology of the research.

Chapter Four presents the results and findings of the research.

Chapter Five discusses the results and findings.

Chapter Six concludes the dissertation.

CHAPTER TWO

General Background Information

2.1 Brief geographical and historical background

Solomon Islands, an archipelago in the south-west Pacific, is comprised of a double chain of mountainous islands and coral atolls stretching over some 800,000 square kilometres of ocean. It is a tropical country with a tropical climate, and like other tropical countries, it has only two seasons, the wet and the dry. It has a land area of 27, 560 square kilometres (Commonwealth Yearbook 1998, p.344) and its closest neighbours are Papua New Guinea to the north-west and the Republic of Vanuatu in the south-east. The major islands are Choiseul, Santa Isabel, New Georgia, Guadalcanal, Malaita and Makira (or San Cristobal). There are also hundreds of smaller islands.

The country gained its independence from Britain on July 7, 1978 and subsequently adopted the constitutional monarchy type of government with the Queen as Head of State, represented in the country by a Governor General. The Government operates under the principles of parliamentary democracy within the Commonwealth of Nations.

The population of 375,000 (1995 estimate); 285,176 (1986 Census) (ibid.) is essentially a rural one. About 90% are rural dwellers most of whom live in small, subsistence-based villages. Honiara, the capital, has an estimated population of about 65,000 (1997 estimate) (ibid.) while the other urban areas of note, Gizo, Auki, Kirakira, Lata, Tulagi,

Buala and Noro, between them have a population of only a couple of thousand. The population consists of five ethnic groups, among which 93% are Melanesians, and the rest are Polynesians (4%), Micronesians or Gilbertese (1.5%), Chinese, Europeans and others (1.5%) (ibid.). The country has a very high annual population growth rate of more than 3%.

There are over eighty languages and almost twenty dialects spoken in these islands. The numbers of speakers of these languages range from a few thousands to only a few individuals. Such a diversity of languages, indicating a rich and varied culture, does lead to problems in, for example, publishing material in vernacular languages. Moreover, English, adopted from the colonial period, is the official language of government, education and commerce, whereas Solomon Islands *Pijin*, a modern form of the Pidgin spoken by the native people and their European masters in the early years of white settlement, acts as the *lingua franca*. Pijin is itself an important unifying element in the country but has a low status. Few books have been published in Pijin partly because of its perceived low status but also because it has no settled orthography. In addition, Pijin is evolving rapidly and being subject to many changes, remains an oral rather than a written language. With the vast majority of published works being in English, the majority of the population are in practice excluded from written materials.

Traditionally, Melanesian culture is very much an oral culture. Oral traditions and story telling play a central part in society so in many ways the idea of libraries as repositories of book-based learning is an alien one. Libraries might therefore be seen as being

irrelevant for the majority of Solomon Islanders and, while it can be argued that libraries need not necessarily be purely book-centred and can be equally relevant for non-literate societies, the reality is that libraries in Solomon Islands are almost entirely book-based and virtually all their material is in English.

As reading is not a priority or a major part of people's day to day living but a privilege to the educated elite, the literacy rates in the country are fairly low. According to a literacy survey undertaken in 1991 (National Literacy Survey), the literacy rate is divided into three categories; 22% of the population being literate, 40% semi-literate and 38% are totally illiterate. It should be noted that these rates are not of a fixed concept but rather a spectrum where certain percentages are not distinguishable from one another. However, the only problem with these rates is that as yet it has been impossible to agree on a standard definition of the term 'literacy' in Solomon Islands.

Education in Solomon Islands is neither universal nor compulsory (Kii 1995, p.170). Since the advent of formal schooling in the country, education has been available to both boys and girls. The Government remains the principal provider of education and the Ministry of Education administers almost all the primary and secondary schools (except for the very few that are privately-owned, mostly by churches) and the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education (SICHE).

The number of primary schools (523 in 1993) (Commonwealth Yearbook 1998, p.344) and classrooms have increased, but still do not reach all the population. In recent years,

secondary schools have also increased in number due to the increasing demand for secondary education. This has resulted in a lot of the primary schools being upgraded to community high schools. Nowadays, all the secondary schools have an academic approach, offering a five-year course leading to the Solomon Islands School Certificate at the end of Form 5. However, some of the provincial secondaries offer a vocational syllabus aimed at students returning to village life after three years of study. At least half of these secondary schools offer Form 6, preparatory to tertiary education overseas.

Tertiary education is provided within the country by the SICHE and through the regional University of the South Pacific (USP) in Fiji and universities in Papua New Guinea, Australia and New Zealand. The SICHE offers courses in teacher training, finance, nursing and secretarial studies, and a range of technical subjects related to Solomon Islands' economy, such as marine and fisheries studies, forestry and agriculture. The College also gives some first-year university courses, and there are hopes that it will eventually be upgraded into a full university.

Solomon Islands is rated as a lower-middle income country. Its economy is based on agriculture, fisheries, forestry and some minerals. Public sector expenditure is high: payrolls increased by 10% in 1994 (Commonwealth Yearbook 1998, p.345), although, more recently, there have been cuts in public sector jobs to save costs. The Government has been facing large fiscal deficits for several years. Despite its financial problems, the Government has been endeavouring to continue its plans to improve infrastructure.

2.2 Brief historical background of library development in Solomon Islands

The first permanent library came into being in 1969 when the first Solomon Islands Public Library (renamed the Honiara Public Library), housed in a well designed building erected with British library development funds, came into operation (Stenderup 1973). Before that:

> In 1957 the Administration of the British Solomon Islands Protectorate sought the Commission's [South Pacific Commission] aid in setting up a travelling library in its territory. The Commission's Literature Bureau was given the three-fold task of selecting and purchasing the books, devising the containers, and planning the organisation of the library. (Allison 1959, p.38)

Until relatively recently, there had been no popular library and information service and such public libraries as there were in those days were established by the colonial administration mainly for the benefit of the expatriate population.

Subsequently, other libraries were set up including the USP Solomon Islands Centre Library, the Honiara Technical Institute and the Honiara Teachers Training College Libraries (now the SICHE Libraries) and the King George VI School Library. Meanwhile, smaller libraries were established in secondary schools and many of the main government departments (many of them now defunct). These libraries received generous donations through the British Books Presentation scheme.

The first positive steps to establish a national library came only towards the end of the colonial era (Williams 1993, p.59). According to a former library adviser, Sidney Hockey (1980, p.113), the concept of a National Library Service (NLS) originated in 1972 when a survey of libraries in the South Pacific region was carried out by R.L. Pearce of the British Council. A New Zealand library adviser, Sally Edridge, was appointed in 1974 and plans to establish the NLS were approved by the Government in 1976. It was not until 1979, a year after independence, however, that the Libraries Act finally established the NLS and required it to provide an "efficient library service throughout the Solomons" (Hockey 1980, p.114). The NLS moved into its present premises, built by the Government in 1981, from its earlier location at the Honiara Secondary School.

While the NLS tries to fulfil the requirement of providing a comprehensive library service nation-wide, it does face many problems, not least the geography of the country itself.

Initially, the role of the NLS covered two areas of service. The first being to support a national identity, it is responsible for the collection, preservation and exploitation of local and international publications on Solomon Islands including materials deposited under the Legal Deposit Act of 1972 (ibid.). This service is also responsible for all the research and bibliographic work and the production of the National Bibliography. At the moment the Legal Deposit Act (or "Libraries (Deposit of Books) Act" as it is now

called) has been roundly and universally ignored and bibliographic control in the country is non-existent, let alone the production of a national bibliography.

The second area of service was the organisation of public library services throughout the country, the provision of technical assistance to the government departmental libraries and assistance in the organisation of libraries in schools and other educational institutions.

Despite fundamental, logistical problems the NLS tries to cover the whole country. Central to the Government's philosophy is that as much power as possible should be devolved to provinces, and early in its history the NLS established libraries in each provincial centre which were intended to service the provinces directly. This saw the establishment of the first three provincial libraries in Auki in the Malaita Province, Gizo in the Western Province and Kirakira in the Makira Province and three others were set up during 1981-1982 (Hockey 1980, p.115). Now most provinces have a public library, but the quality of service varies tremendously. One unfortunate result has been that few of the provinces have since provided adequate funds to purchase new books - resulting in the inevitable decline in the standard of services.

In the late 1980s, however, after it became evident that the provincial libraries were not really serving the provinces adequately, it was decided that a system of community libraries should be operated. With the communities taking the initiative, the NLS helped in setting them up, offered advice on how to operate them and also provided some of the

books, but the communities themselves were responsible for the building and staff. The running of the library was left to the community. As a result, about ten community libraries were established, however, not very many of them still operate today.

The majority of libraries are concentrated in Honiara, the capital city, with a relatively small number in each of the nine provinces. In addition to the National Library and Honiara's only public library, there are quite a number of special, academic and school libraries. There is a large percentage of special libraries within government ministries and other statutory authorities, national banks, private businesses, non-governmental organisations, and scientific and research institutions all have their own libraries. Academic libraries are found at the SICHE and the USP Solomon Islands Centre, while the several secondary and primary schools in the town also have libraries.

It is the role of the NLS to co-ordinate the overall development of public, school and government libraries. Its staff make regular advisory visits throughout the country; unfortunately current legislation does not provide it with the necessary authority to require minimum standards of provision. Despite having a limited budget and insufficient staffing to effectively carry out its objectives, the NLS has achieved a great deal and has played an increasingly significant role in the development of the nation's library and information services.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

3.1 Research process and method

The research took place in two stages. The first stage included the initial planning, literature search and the preparation of the survey instrument. This process initially took place at Loughborough University. The major part of the research was the actual fieldwork which was carried out in Solomon Islands between July and August 1998. The following describes the process and methods relating to each of the stages.

3.2 Literature search

After the topic was decided on, a comprehensive literature search was undertaken in England. My first attempt at a literature search was conducted in the Pilkington Library at Loughborough University. This attempt failed because, although the Library's OPAC, indexes and abstracts, databases and other resources were searched thoroughly, not surprisingly, nothing was available on Solomon Islands libraries. However, quite a number of books and journals on library and information services in other developing countries were found. These were looked at as background information.

Next, the Institute of Commonwealth Studies of London University was contacted, where it was thought some reports might have existed, but again, nothing was available. This suggested that very little had been written and published on the subject.

Despite the lack of availability of immediately useful materials on the subject, the literature search continued until the time of writing. About half of the reports and articles on the subject were obtained in Solomon Islands during the survey period and another half was requested from the University of the South Pacific Library in Fiji.

3.3 The survey instrument: Questionnaire

Considering the scattered locations of libraries, with some in the very remote islands, it was decided that the questionnaire was the most appropriate method of data collection for this research. The questionnaire was intended to be administered by the researcher, but for those institutions that could not be visited, it was sent by post. By administering the questionnaire, it was possible to expand the information gathering exercise through informal interview and discussion with those libraries that were visited, in order to obtain additional information.

The most important consideration for the choice of the questionnaire was the length of time available to undertake the survey. Equally important, it was also considered that the questionnaire would not only be easy and relatively cheap to administer, but would also provide both qualitative and quantitative information.

The questionnaire was prepared after a series of meetings with the project supervisor prior to my departure to Solomon Islands. Simplicity was the keyword in its design as it was to be a self-completed questionnaire particularly in the cases of those libraries that were difficult to visit and therefore respondents would have no opportunity to query anything which they might find confusing. A copy of the questionnaire appears in Appendix A.

3.4 The survey

The actual fieldwork began with identifying what libraries were there and which ones were actively operating. This was to enable the selection of a representative sample of libraries to be chosen for the survey. For practical reasons, it was inevitable that only the actively functioning libraries were chosen to participate in the questionnaire survey.

The NLS was approached to help identify the libraries for the survey. There are no precise numbers of libraries in Solomon Islands but we do know that there is only one national library service, at least two academic libraries, eight public and provincial libraries, about ten community libraries, over fifteen special libraries, and well over thirty school libraries, or at least collections in schools which are called libraries, many of which are poorly organised (if at all), and inadequately staffed. These are approximate figures based on my own estimation. However imprecise they are, these figures give us

an idea of how many libraries there are in Solomon Islands. Clearly the vast bulk of libraries are school libraries, followed by special libraries.

After the libraries were identified, a letter was sent to them and their parent institutions notifying them of the survey and explaining the purpose of the research. A copy of this first letter appears in Appendix B. This was followed by telephone calls to those libraries that were accessible by telephone to arrange a suitable time for the questionnaire to be delivered.

For those libraries in and around Honiara that could be reached by road transport, I delivered the questionnaire myself, gave the librarians time to answer it and then collected it at the same time or shortly afterwards. By doing this I was also able to visit the libraries and make observations. In many instances, the respondents were encouraged to answer the questionnaire immediately at the time of delivery. This also enabled me to conduct further questioning and discussion with the respondents in order to obtain additional information. In several cases, a follow-up visit was made for further discussion which elicited useful and interesting information.

For the remote libraries, the questionnaire was sent by post along with a covering letter (see Appendix C for copy of letter). A return addressed and stamped envelope was also provided so that the respondents could return the questionnaire immediately after completion. This was to help minimise the problem of non-response as far as possible.

3.5 Responses

In total, 24 libraries were identified to which the questionnaire was distributed. Of the 24, responses were received from 20 of them, providing me with the wealth of information about the real state of libraries in Solomon Islands. The 20 libraries that responded include 1 national, 2 academic, 3 public and provincial, 4 school and 10 special libraries. It should be noted that their respective parent institutions include government ministries, regional and educational institutions, town and provincial authorities, secondary schools and private organisations. Appendix D contains a list of the libraries that participated in the survey including their responsible authorities.

The overall response rate was fairly high indicating that the survey was very successful, however, it could have been improved had it not been for two identified reasons. Firstly, it was unfortunate that several of the well-known libraries were among the non-responses, notably provincial libraries. This was apparently due to their remote locations and the communication difficulties to these areas which did not allow follow-ups to be made within the time of the survey. In addition, internal financial difficulties had forced a number of libraries to close during the survey period. Whether these were temporary, or permanent closures for some, was not clear. However, it is believed that the gap especially between the number of public/provincial libraries and the special libraries could have been narrowed had there been fewer non-responses and none had been closed.

It should also be noted that of the 20 received responses, two were answered by their respective authorities, stating that the temporary closure of these libraries was mainly due to financial and staffing difficulties being faced at the time. Although these two libraries are included as respondents, they will be excluded from most of the discussions in the later part of the report. Furthermore, being aware of the sensitive nature of some of the information given to me, both the questionnaire respondents and the interviewees were assured that all information given to me would be treated in the strictest confidence. My findings, including comments and opinions, are therefore reported anonymously.

CHAPTER FOUR

An account of responses and findings

This chapter provides a description of the responses from the questionnaire and the other findings of the survey. By providing a description, the reader will gain a general idea of the resources and services available in the libraries throughout the country, which is one of the main aims of this report.

4.1 Resources

The sizes of Solomon Islands libraries and their collections vary considerably. The survey revealed that the main components of these libraries were books and periodicals. The stocks of public, provincial and school libraries, for instance, were confined to relatively small outdated collections of reference material and general reading, all in English, plus a small number of periodicals. At the time of the survey collection numbers ranged between several hundred to just over 15,000, but the majority of the collections had less than 10,000 volumes. It was also discovered that a majority of the libraries did not keep proper records of their stocks. When responding to the question about their collection sizes, 10 out of the 18 respondents provided rough estimates, while 6 out of 18 did not provide any statistics at all, stating they had no idea how many items their collections held.

The only institutions that were able to provide exact statistics on their collections were the two academic libraries. The USP Centre Library had a collection of 11,400 volumes (Vakaciwa, 1998). The collection was divided into four major sections; a reference collection, a general collection, a small fiction collection and a collection of periodicals. The SICHE Library Service, which had libraries in each of its five campuses, had a total stock of 26,904 items. More than half of this stock was located in its main library. Table 1 below shows the gradual growth of their bookstock for the years 1995-97.

Table 1: Summary of the SIHCE Library Service book collection 1995-97

Campus libraries	1995	1996	1997
Panatina	13,992	14,740	15,053
Kukum	5,851	6,341	6,742
Ranadi (Marine School)	1,256	1,328	1,340
Fote (National Agriculture Institute)	1,321	1,386	1,443
Poitete (Institute of Forestry)	1,059	1,124	1,126
New books (still to be processed)	-	1,873	1,200
Total	**23,479**	**26,792**	**26,904**

Source: SICHE 1997 Annual Report

4.1.1 Non-print materials

In addition to their bookstocks, the National Library and the two academic libraries also had a range of audio-visual (AV) materials such as videocassettes, audio tapes/cassettes, microfilms and microfiches, filmstrips/reels and slides. Of these three libraries, only the

SICHE Library Service had a well-organised AV collection. Its AV section also undertakes video production for the College.

Public, provincial and school libraries did not have audio-visual materials. In special libraries, only 4 out of 10 respondents indicated having a small collection of videos and audiocassettes, which were mainly for instructional purposes. They included the libraries of CBSI, FFA, National Museum and Solomon Telekom Training College.

4.1.2 Audio library

Among the special libraries is the SIBC Library, which is an audio library, consisting mainly of materials for radio broadcasting. This library is for use only by the SIBC staff for their various programmes and is not open to the general public. At the time of the survey, it had a collection of 14,478 items; of which about 13,634 were audio materials, such as audio cassettes and tapes, CDs, cartridges and vinyl discs, and only about 844 were print materials. It also had digital connections to overseas broadcasting organisations, which enabled them to acquire news and hit songs, especially from the USA.

4.1.3 Special collections

Collections of significant importance were also found in some of the major libraries. The two academic libraries, for instance, had special collections of books for research and basic recommended texts for the courses offered by their institutions. Other libraries had special collections which are unique to their own institutions and which were generally

not accessible by the general public. The FFA Library's collection of confidential reports and the SIBC Library's archival collection of local materials of historical importance are two examples of this.

4.1.4 Solomon Islands Collection

The Solomon Islands Collection housed at the National Library is a collection of national importance and the most important kind in the country. As the name implies, the SIC consists of materials on Solomon Islands, featuring subject areas such as anthropology, history, World War II, education and government. Other publications in the collection include reports, statistics, theses and dissertations on Solomon Islands and by Solomon Islanders. The SIC is the legal depository section of the National Library, a requirement of the Libraries (Deposit of Books) Act. It is a closed access collection and is mainly used by students and researchers.

4.2 Services & Clientele

The two basic readers services provided by all of the libraries in Solomon Islands are reference and lending. However, larger libraries such as the National Library and the two academic libraries offer a much wider range of services. Electronic information services or the use of information technology (IT) such as the OPAC (Online Public Access Catalogue), the Internet, CD-ROM and photocopying were, at the time of the survey, very rare. In most cases, IT services had not really found their way into most of these libraries. For instance, only 3 out of 18 respondents, namely: the CBSI, FFA and USP

Centre libraries, had an OPAC that was up and running. In addition, of the 18 respondents only 2, namely: the FFA and USP Centre libraries had Internet access. Furthermore, of the 18 respondents, only the SICHE and USP Centre libraries indicated having CD-ROM. It should also be noted that although a total of 7 out of the18 respondents indicated having their own computers or having access to one within their divisions, most of these computers were used mainly for office duties.

4.2.1 National Library Service

The NLS, with its role and responsibility of providing library services nation-wide, provides reference and interlibrary loans. Its Central Reference Collection and Solomon Islands Collection are well used by students, researchers and others, however, the National Library does not lend out materials to the general public. In addition, it provides library extension services by way of training and advisory services to public, provincial, school and special libraries. It also distributes to these libraries book donations by overseas donors, in particular the Book Aid International from the United Kingdom. The National Library has recently started to automate its collection using CDS/ISIS search and retrieval software, starting this process with its Solomon Islands Collection.

4.2.2 Academic libraries

The patrons of academic libraries include the students, staff and employees of their respective institutions. Researchers and interested members of the public are allowed access but without borrowing privileges.

The SICHE Library Service provides a wide range of services including general reference, lending, interlibrary loans, reservation, audio-visuals, photocopying, tutorials, video production and lending, CD-ROM, plus children's services.

Similarly, the USP Centre Library provides general reference, lending, interlibrary loans, photocopying and CD-ROM searches. In addition, it provides catalogue information searching via an OPAC and has Internet access which was introduced in September 1997. The OPAC uses CDS/ISIS cataloguing and retrieval software, which has a user-friendly search retrieval interface (Dadalo 1996, p.6). Since its installation in 1995, it has been well used by students. Although the library has Internet access, the users did not have direct access to it at the time of the survey. The use of this service was restricted to library staff as the only computer in the library was occupied by the OPAC and the Internet connection was via the staff computer in the library office. The library staff handled requests for information from the Internet, which were very irregular.

4.2.3 Public and provincial libraries

In addition to the two basic services of reference and lending, these libraries provide interlibrary loans mostly with the National Library and their provincial counterparts on an ad hoc basis. Children's and junior sections and reading areas existed in these libraries but were poorly stocked or lacked the relevant materials. Only 1 out of the 3 public/provincial library respondents conducted reading and story-telling sessions with children, but again, on an ad hoc basis.

4.2.4 School libraries

With their poorly stocked collections, at the time of the survey, school libraries provided only reference and lending to their students and teachers. They did not use computers nor did they have a photocopier of their own. Of the two schools that indicated having a photocopier, it was shared by the whole school and not installed in the library. It is worth noting that all the school library respondents indicated that they would be interested in gaining access to computers.

4.2.5 Special libraries

All the special libraries surveyed provided reference and lending to the staff and employees of their respective organisations. In addition, they also allowed access to students and researchers, and some extended provision to the public on restricted use but usually without borrowing privileges.

In terms of other services, only 3 out of 10 respondents provided interlibrary loans, 4 out of 10 respondents had their own photocopier and provided a photocopying service, and 2 out of 10 respondents had developed an OPAC system using CDS/ISIS database. The two libraries that had an OPAC were the libraries of the CBSI and the FFA - the other library with an Internet connection.

4.2.6 Forum Fisheries Agency Library

Owned by the Forum Fisheries Agency, a regional organisation representing 16 countries of the Pacific including Australia and New Zealand which deals with tuna resource management, this library is well established in many respects. At the time of the survey, it had a collection of about 8,600 books and 519 serial titles which included newspapers, magazines, journals, annual reports and many more. It also provided a wide range of services including:

- general reference and lending of materials;
- current awareness - i.e. circulation of content pages of newspapers, journal and magazines to the staff of the organisation;
- interlibrary loans;
- photocopying;
- reference requests with other fisheries libraries of member countries; and
- OPAC and Internet searches.

Although its usage may appear to be highly restricted to the FFA staff, students, researchers, consultants and staff from other fisheries organisations are welcome to use the library under closed supervision provided they seek prior permission.

4.3 Staffing

4.3.1 Staff numbers

Staff numbers in the libraries that were surveyed ranged from a single-person staff in 5 of the 10 special libraries to 26 people for the SICHE Library Service. Table 2 below shows the staff numbers in these libraries.

Table 2: Staff numbers by library, 1998

Name of library	Number of staff
SICHE Library Service	26
National Library Service	10
Honiara Public Library	5
USP Centre Library	4
Gizo Provincial Library	2
Forum Fisheries Agency Library	2
Kohimarama Theological College Library	2
SIBC Library	2
National Parliamentary Library	2
Central Bank of Solomon Islands Library	1
High Court Library	1
Royal Solomon Islands Police Service Library	1
National Museum Library	1
Solomon Telekom Training College Library	1
Betikama Adventist High School Library	1 (Teacher)
Selwyn College Secondary School Library	1 (Teacher)
St Joseph's Catholic Secondary School Library	1 (Teacher)
Ruavatu Secondary School Library	(Teachers with students taking turns)
*Buala Provincial Library	(Not staffed at the time of survey)
*Central Hospital Library	(Not staffed at the time of survey)

** Were among the respondents, but were excluded from most of the discussions in the report.*

As seen in Table 2, the majority of libraries had only one or two staff members. This can be a very difficult job for them in situations where the libraries have a large collection and a large number of users, which warrant a bigger staff. In at least seven of the libraries surveyed, it was discovered that the person staffing the library also had other duties to perform in addition to his/her library duties. This is usually the case in the special libraries which are under government departments, where either a clerical or secretarial officer runs the library without any formal library training. There were instances at three special libraries during the visits where the persons looking after the library voiced their dissatisfaction with not being able to concentrate on their library duties because they had other duties to perform as well. In all of the secondary schools, a teacher, usually from the English department, was assigned the librarian task with a group of students taking turns to assist.

4.3.2 Trained and untrained staff

Table 3 below shows the numbers of trained and untrained staff by types of libraries at the time of the survey.

Table 3: Trained and untrained staff, 1998

Type of Library	Graduate Librarians	Graduates (other degree)	Diploma holders	Certificate holders	Untrained	Total
National	0	1	4	2	6	13
Academic	1	2	9	5	12	29
Public/ provincial	0	0	0	0	7	7
School	Not	Applicable	Not	Applicable		
Special	1	0	1	4	7	13
Total	**2**	**3**	**14**	**11**	**32**	**62**

The table indicates that more than half of the total number of library staff was, at the time of the survey, untrained. In number terms, 32 out of 62 people were untrained. Of the 32 untrained, 17 were undertaking various forms of training locally. Of the trained staff, only 2 were full graduate professional librarians, 3 were graduates in other fields with a library diploma, 14 were diploma holders and 11 were certificate holders. The diploma and certificate holders undertook their training either at the University of the South Pacific or the University of Papua New Guinea. The two graduate professional librarians at that time were not locals. They were attached to the two regional institutions, the FFA and USP Centre libraries.

4.3.3 Training plans

Of the 18 respondents, only 3 institutions had staff development and training plans in place, namely: the National Library, the SICHE Library Service and USP Centre

Library. The rest did not have any training plans at all. However, several libraries indicated that their staff had been encouraged by their management or supervisors to do part-time library studies at the USP Centre towards either a certificate or diploma. While several others had, on their own initiative, started these courses for personal improvement in their work, as well as for the purpose of promotion. They are to be highly commended for their commitment to the profession.

4.3.4 Training programmes for the National Library Service

Both local and overseas training programmes are in place for the NLS. Six of their ten-member staff were, at the time of the survey, on the Local Training Programme 1998-2000 having enrolled in either the certificate or diploma in library/information studies programmes at the USP Centre under NLS sponsorship. The Overseas In-service Training Programme, however, had to be held back a year following the resignation of the officer who was supposed to have taken up overseas training for a library degree. The officer has since joined the SICHE Library Service.

4.3.5 Training programmes for the SICHE Library Service

The SICHE Library Service has a more elaborate training programme. Their staff development plan clearly set out the training needs of their staff under the categories of Full-time Training, Fellowships/Attachments/Conferences, Distance Learning, and In-house/On-the-job Training. This staff development plan is an ongoing programme which aims at eventually getting the staff some formal training and qualification in order to

enable them to provide an effective and efficient library service to the College community.

In 1997, three officers went on full-time training with two undertaking the library diploma programme at the University of Papua New Guinea while a third did her secretarial studies at the College. Under Fellowships/Attachments/Conferences, three senior staff members went for one-month attachments to the USP Library in Fiji and the Adelaide TAFE Library in Australia, while the College's Head of Library attended the IFLA Conference in Copenhagen, Denmark between August and September. Under Distance Learning, three more officers enrolled in the Diploma in Library/Information programme at the USP Honiara Centre. Under In-house training, a library advisor conducted a three-week course for the junior staff. The training was funded by a variety of sources.

4.3.6 Training programmes for the USP Centre Library

As the USP Honiara Centre is an extension centre of the University of the South Pacific, library staff are encouraged to pursue para-professional qualifications if they have not had any formal training before joining the institution. It is the USP's policy that its regional staff should take on formal training at some point while being employed by the institution. For this reason, two of the Centre Library's four-member staff enrolled in the Basic Library Skills Certificate programme offered at the USP Centre. In addition, staff members at a para-professional level are also encouraged to upgrade existing qualifications to degree level, if they have the chance. At the time of the survey, one of

the staff was studying for an Information and Library Studies degree at Loughborough University in England.

In-house training, seminars, workshops and short-term attachments are also available for the non-professional staff. These are to enrich and upgrade their knowledge and skills so as to attain better qualities and experiences related to their jobs. In September 1997, for instance, a junior staff member attended the Centre Libraries workshop held at the main USP Library in Fiji, which proved to be very beneficial.

4.4 Funding

The main source of funding for the libraries is the institutions or the organisations to which they belong. Interestingly, budgets for libraries in 1998 ranged from nil to almost SI$800,000.00, but the majority that indicated having a budget had amounts in the vicinity of SI$100,000.00 while others had relatively small amounts, as little as SI$1,000.00.

The national, academic and special libraries have budgets, which vary considerably depending on the size of the libraries, the healthy of their funding bodies at the time of the survey, and how much money they were allocated. Obviously, the large libraries such as the SICHE Library Service and the NLS, which are government-funded, have bigger budgets than the smaller libraries. In 1998, for example, the SICHE Library Service, which had the biggest budget of SI$767,620.00, spent about 75% on salaries

and only about 8% on collection development. In the same year, the NLS with a budget of SI$426,885.00 spent 80% on salaries and only 10% on collection development.

Amounts and percentages vary in the smaller libraries that have smaller budgets and fewer staff. The libraries of the two regional institutions, for example, allocate a much larger portion of their budgets on stock. In 1998, the FFA Library with only a two-member staff spent 45% on salary and 55% on other library operations including stock. In the same year, the USP Centre Library spent 40% on salaries, 40% on collection development and 20% on miscellaneous costs.

Budgets in public and provincial libraries are controlled from the central funds of their local authorities. Librarians do not have much say in budget preparations. Special libraries, however, differ in the ways their budgets are handled. Special libraries under government departments such as the Parliamentary Library and that of the National Museum have their allocations controlled from their various departmental budgets. Libraries under private organisations also have budget allocations, but again, they do not have much control over their budgets except for spending them on stock. In most of these special libraries, salaries are catered for in their institutions' central budgets.

Budgets for school libraries are virtually non-existent. No money for books is the basic theme of almost 100% of schools. School libraries rely heavily on book donations, especially book donations from overseas schools and libraries, or books channelled through the NLS from Book Foundations.

4.5 Awareness and publicity

Of the 18 respondents, only 9 libraries had some form of awareness and publicity programmes in place for both the public and their users. Included in these are the 2 academic libraries, 4 school libraries and only 3 out of 10 special libraries. Unfortunately, the National Library, public and provincial libraries did not, at the time of the survey, have any promotional programmes as they used to in the 1980s. This has been attributed to the lack of funds and resources to carry out such programmes.

The two academic libraries, the SICHE Library Service and USP Centre Library aim their awareness and promotional programmes at their primary users; students, staff and employees of the institutions, researchers, visiting lecturers and fellows. The SICHE Library Service organises annual library orientation programmes, biannual user education programmes and regular library tours. The USP Centre Library, on the other hand, runs orientation tours at the beginning of each semester, has in-house brochures and puts up displays. Both institutions regularly publicise and promote their services in their respective radio programmes over the national radio.

School libraries publicise and promote their services to students and teachers during school assemblies, English classes, and class library sessions. The special libraries that publicise and promote their services do this mainly through brochures, notices and posters.

Of the 3 out of 10 special library respondents, the FFA Library has the most elaborate version of awareness and publicity for its users. It has a library guide and puts up notices and displays. For the FFA staff, it runs a current awareness service in which content pages of newspapers, journals and magazines are circulated to alert staff on issues relevant to their areas of work. The library also circulates its new accession lists so that staff are made aware of the new arrivals of books and journal titles. This is also done via the E-mail.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussions

5.1 Resources

One of the most important aspects of any library and information service is access to resources. The scope of this project did not include an in-depth assessment of the current holdings of the libraries. Thus, the survey revealed nothing about the quality of the books, their relevance to users, or the amount of duplication in the libraries. However, suffice it to say, there is a dire need for more materials in both print and non-print formats. It was apparent from the survey that the libraries were all deficient in monographs, periodicals, current reference materials and AV materials.

In general, most collections needed extensive development, in particular the public and school libraries. From personal observation, the poor quality of the collections in the public/provincial libraries, school and government department special libraries clearly shows that there has been inadequate funds for collection development for a long period of time.

On the whole, most libraries indicated that their collections had increased slightly in the last couple of years despite inadequate funding. The SICHE Library Service which stands alone in the number of books and subscriptions and the size of their book budget,

revealed that the growth of their collections had been very slow due to inadequate funding from the Government. A similar comment came from the NLS which is also funded by the Government.

For most of the public and school libraries, there has been a heavy reliance on book donations channelled through the NLS from donor agencies such as the Ranfurly Library Service and the Asian Foundation. While such donations were welcomed, they were not always appropriate for local needs. During the 1980s, the British Council operated British Book Presentation Programme was better as it enabled the NLS to choose the books itself (Williams 1993, p.63). This programme, which incidentally also provided funds for training courses, has now ended and has left the NLS looking for other sources.

There has been growing concern over other book donations to school libraries. One respondent commented that secondary school libraries had been the dumping grounds for discarded books from Australian and New Zealand libraries through the Rotary clubs. He concluded by saying: "I call for an end to these book donations because most of them are out-of-date and unsuitable for our schools."

Several public and school libraries also stated that, although a lot of their books were outdated, they were finding it very difficult to discard them as they did not have the funds to buy new books.

It was found that most libraries do not keep proper records of their holdings, which seems to show a lack of understanding by the untrained library staff of the significance of keeping a proper record of their stocks. The record of acquisitions not only shows the total number of items in the collections, but also shows the record of each individual item. This information would not only aid the staff in their collection development process, but also provide the data to help them in their bids for funding from their parent bodies. This is one area where the training for the staff becomes very crucial.

5.1.1 Legal depository

An important source that would greatly benefit the legal depository libraries and help build up their collections is the utilisation of the legal deposit legislation. As noted previously, this piece of legislation has so far not been utilised. As required under the Libraries (Deposit of Books) Act amended in 1981 (Walton 1996, p.25), a copy of all materials printed or published in Solomon Islands, or by Solomon Islanders or about Solomon Islands must be deposited in the National Library and one in the USP Solomon Islands Centre Library. A proposed further amendment to the Act suggested the inclusion of the SICHE Library Service as the third deposit library (ibid.). This amendment is considered very important and was doubly welcomed as SICHE, being the biggest educational institution in the country, needs to expand its collection with local publications.

5.2 Services

5.2.1 Reader Services

Despite the limitations of resources in most of the libraries, facts seem to show that the majority of libraries appear to be quite well used. This is evident from the statistics collected from the survey and the observations made during the visits. The following examples demonstrate the case.

In 1997, the SICHE Library Service, with a total collection of 26,904 items between its five libraries and a large population of students and staff had up to 550 patrons using the libraries each day and loans running at an average of 220 per week (SICHE 1997 Annual Report). These statistics suggest that most of the users go to the libraries to use other services rather than to borrow items. The most popular services used by patrons in the order of popularity are: general usage (e.g. use of study facilities, borrow and return books); audio-visual; periodicals; reference; research; reservation; and interlibrary loans. With the recent opening of their new central library at the Kukum Campus (a month after this survey - i.e. September 1998), there is no doubt that services will greatly improve.

The USP Centre Library, which is primarily used by students and staff to borrow books, read newspapers and periodicals, use study facilities and seek assistance for information retrieval both manually and online, is also very heavily used. With a collection of 11,400 items and a much smaller community than its other academic counterpart, the statistics

of usage were much lower. In 1998, an average of 238 patrons used the library per week with an average of 90 loans per week. Again, these statistics suggest that the majority of patrons used the other services rather than borrowing books.

Obviously usage in the smaller libraries was less. Services to users in public libraries was restricted by the lack of training of many of the staff which means that assistance to patrons would have been extremely limited. Many school libraries appeared to be quite well used, despite the limitations of small outdated bookstocks, limited seating and largely unqualified staff. The quality of service to patrons provided by most special libraries appears also to have been affected considerably by inadequate stocks and untrained staff.

5.2.2 Electronic information services

Given the general level of development of libraries in Solomon Islands, computerisation has made little impact on information provision in the country. As a result of the lack of basic infrastructures and other facilities to develop meaningful systems, libraries in Solomon Islands lag far behind in the race for automation and the use of other sophisticated information technologies. As previously mentioned, only three libraries had an OPAC and only two had Internet and online access at the time of the survey. It is pertinent to mention that these libraries belong to organisations, such as the FFA and USP, which have the finance and the commitment towards quality information and are prepared to implement technologies which benefit their communities.

The implementation of information technology requires finance, expertise and a great deal of commitment from the parent body. By and large, most Solomon Islands libraries are still too underdeveloped even to consider the use of information technology. Many of them do not have the money and expertise to support PCs, CD-ROMs and other electronic devices. However, as the use of computers is rapidly becoming very popular in the work place, there is the likelihood that more libraries will use computers in the foreseeable future. This would encourage more libraries to implement an automated library system. The survey revealed that at least five libraries were certain about this development; the NLS, the SICHE Library Service, the Solomon Telekom Training College Library, the SIBC Library and the Parliamentary Library.

5.2.3 Interlibrary loan service

The survey revealed that only a small number of libraries were involved in the interlibrary loan service. Although this is the most popular form of co-operation among libraries, very few libraries in Solomon Islands were utilising this service at the time of the survey. In my opinion, interlibrary loans provide a very valuable means of augmenting the limited resources of the libraries. They also provide a means whereby materials that are not heavily used by one library could be obtained for users in another library. Thus, it is a very important service that needs encouraging.

5.3 Staffing

The quality of library service depends on the adequacy of the library staff. Regardless of the size of collection, facilities or budget, the library cannot function as an educational force in the community if the library staff is too small or lacks the special qualifications required for the work.

Staffing problems have always been a major concern of the profession. Everywhere in developing countries there has been a shortage of personnel in the profession (Elmaki 1983, p.58).

At the time of the survey, libraries in Solomon Islands were generally inadequately staffed. All of the public, school and special libraries were staffed by only one or two people, most of whom did not have a formal library qualification. The level of service in these libraries was severely limited as a result. The survey also identified inadequate staffing, especially at the professional level, as a major problem confronting the libraries. In spite of these problems, it was discovered that there was admirable commitment and dedication to the principles of library service amongst all the library staff.

5.3.1 National Library Service staffing

The NLS was seriously understaffed at the time of the survey, it had ten staff members although there were once fourteen. The survey also revealed that the present staff number was significantly less than the seventeen required under the 1998 Government

Reform Programme. However, because of the Government's long term economic crisis, it will take longer for the NLS to fill its vacant positions.

The problem of staff leaving the NLS for other libraries after having trained under government scholarships is an issue of great concern especially as the NLS is required to provide a comprehensive library service nation-wide. Thus, it cannot afford to continue to lose its trained personnel. Opinions from the survey suggest that the issues of salary and conditions were the main attractions for officers to leave the NLS for other libraries. It is believed that salary levels and conditions in other libraries are far better than those of the NLS. This raises doubts about the Government's commitment to the provision of library services in the country. The problem seems to be a lack of commitment on the part of the Government to support the development of libraries in the country. The national leaders, especially the politicians, always stress the importance of education as an approach to the country's development. However, many of them seem to be ignorant of the importance of library and information services in the process of development.

According to Elmaki (1983, pp.8-9), libraries were provided in the developed countries to contribute to the supply of skilled personnel, to help those who are studying privately and to encourage all who wish to read for a useful purpose. She believes that the situation in developing countries is different, for people there are unaware of the usefulness of libraries for personal development, as well as general progress, and thus totally ignore their importance. In addition, as a result of this general ignorance, the national leaders, too, are not always sure about the practical role of libraries in nation-

building. Hence, libraries have had to take a separate place in the queue for resources, usually behind education, health services and industrial development. However, in my opinion, education cannot function properly without libraries, therefore both should be given the same priority.

Another fact which clearly shows the Government's lack of commitment to the library service in Solomon Islands is the long delay in the construction of the new National Library building. Plans for this new development, which would include automation and modern facilities, have been delayed for many years. It is important that such a poor attitude towards libraries must change immediately for the betterment of the service.

5.4 Training

The shortage of qualified librarians in Solomon Islands libraries is a problem that needs immediate attention in order for the libraries to provide effective services to the citizens of the country. In my opinion, the essential ingredient of quality library/information service is quality staff - trained, committed, enthusiastic, open-minded, innovative and with expertise in the provision of information. To provide a quality service, librarians need to have a vision of what can be accomplished and must have the personal drive to develop strategies that will bring these ideas to practical reality. This can only be achieved given proper library training.

As noted previously, more than half of the staff in the libraries covered by the survey were unqualified. This number was obviously greater considering the bulk of libraries that were not included in the survey. However, it was encouraging to note from the survey that more than half of the untrained staff were studying part-time, enrolling in the library programmes offered solely through distance mode by the University of the South Pacific.

All the librarians spoken to were acutely conscious of the need to train their staff and to upgrade their own skills. One of the most frequently expressed needs was continuing education activities, such as workshops and training attachments to other libraries.

Traditionally there had been five routes to training and/or qualification available for library workers in Solomon Islands: i) attendance at an overseas university; ii) secondment to other libraries in-country or abroad; iii) in-house training; iv) occasional training courses; and v) USP extension courses.

For full-time study abroad, Solomon Islands students would normally attend the University of Papua New Guinea to study the diploma or degree courses. Secondment to other libraries in-country may be very beneficial as would secondment abroad, however, the latter can be very expensive and is beyond the budgets of most institutions in the country. In-house training tends to be tailored to the situation which exists in one specific library so although there had been some co-operation in this field, most courses were run and organised independently, and little of the benefit is shared.

As previously mentioned, other popular training courses were those organised by the British Council in association with the NLS. These were particularly beneficial for provincial, school and special librarians not only helping them to improve their skills in the technical services but bringing them together for one or two weeks to forge links, discuss problems and give support to one another. However, when the British Council's British Book Presentation Programme came to an end at the end of the 1980s, such training courses came to a halt.

The USP library programmes have proved very popular in recent years. Since their introduction; the Certificate in Librarianship in 1981, the Diploma in Library & Information Studies in 1989 (Williams 1992b, p.8) and the Certificate in Library/Information Studies Basic Skills in 1998 (Jones 1997, p.24), enrolments for Solomon Islands have steadily increased. Unfortunately, USP had to phase out the former Certificate in the early 1990s as it was impossible to run it simultaneously with the Diploma due to a severe shortage of money, staff and resources at the time (Williams 1992b, p.19). However, the recent introduction of the new Certificate course has encouraged more people to enrol in it.

There was a dramatic increase in enrolments for Solomon Islands in the USP Diploma and Certificate programmes up to the beginning of 1999 (Rainey 1999). In the Certificate in Librarianship which ended in 1993, seven people graduated (6 male and 1 female). As of the end of 1998, three people have graduated with the Diploma in

Library & Information Studies (1 male and 2 female). At the beginning of 1999, the enrolment in the Diploma was thirteen (5 male and 8 female) while the new Certificate attracted nine people (3 male and 6 female); twenty-two people in total.

These statistics forecast a good future as far as the training of library workers is concerned. Once the above twenty-two have graduated and more people continue to study library courses by this method, there is no doubt that the problem of untrained staff will gradually be resolved. Training not only benefits those individuals concerned in terms of better pay and promotion, but most importantly the new knowledge and skills they gain will help improve their work performance and, as a result, will help raise the overall standard of library services in the country.

An important area of library training that has been overlooked in Solomon Islands is the education of teacher-librarians. Virtually no attention has been given to this aspect of library education in Solomon Islands. The school library should be seen to play a central role in the educational process and therefore the training of teacher-librarians is absolutely crucial in order for them to provide an effective library service in their schools. Other developing countries, such as Papua New Guinea, have done this in the past by offering an elective course in library studies to secondary school teacher trainees (Calvert 1981, pp.74-75). In my view, SICHE should start considering this idea as soon as possible to help improve the staffing problems faced by school libraries.

Another suggestion is for SICHE to consider starting a course for library attendants/assistants/technicians to bring on stream more people who have a basic knowledge of what is needed in a library and who might later be encouraged to do the USP courses, then go abroad for more study.

5.5 Library co-operation

The study revealed that there had been very little co-operation among libraries in Solomon Islands. All the librarians spoken to during the survey shared this view. One librarian commented that the libraries had been operating in isolation and as a result have achieved very little (Manerara 1999).

In this era of information explosion, this issue of co-operation is more relevant than it has been at any other time in history. This is because no library, however extensive the resources or large the budget, can afford to stock all the materials for its current and future users. In Solomon Islands where libraries are generally poorly facilitated, inappropriately stocked, inadequately staffed and insufficiently funded, co-operation would greatly benefit all libraries and make a lot of difference to their service provisions. Library co-operation has numerous benefits including resource sharing, the collective organisation of workshops and short training courses, and most importantly, it is the key element to the formation of a library association.

However, this does not mean to say that there has been no co-operation amongst libraries. In fact, there have been in the past and there is still some form of co-operation between several libraries, but not on a large scale. For instance, in 1992, the NLS and the USP Centre Library organised a series of workshops to provide a basic knowledge of library skills and organisation (Williams 1992b, p.21). It was believed at that time that the usual ways of in-house training were, in a country short of qualified librarian, expensive in terms of personnel and resources. So this move was doubly welcomed. Tutoring of the workshops was, in the main, done by the NLS staff, with the USP Centre providing the training materials and facilities. In this way costs were kept to a minimum and the maximum number of people were reached. Unfortunately, this co-operation has been inactive over the last couple of years mainly due to the lack of funds and because certain leading figures have left their institutions.

It must be said that libraries in Solomon Islands have lagged behind for the simple reason that there was no authority to insist on their importance. Whilst several attempts have been made in the past to establish a library association, for some reasons these attempts have failed.

As is all too common in developing countries where librarianship as a profession is largely unrecognised by governments with consequent low salary and status for library workers, the library profession tends to be underrated in Solomon Islands. However, there is much commitment to this profession by library workers in Solomon Islands.

All the librarians interviewed were in favour of the formation of a library association, believing that it would be a move in the right direction to solving many of the problems faced by the libraries and their staff. It was felt unanimously that there is a need to encourage co-operation among libraries at a national level and this could be further strengthened with the establishment of a Solomon Islands Library Association.

The perceived benefits of having a library association in Solomon Islands are numerous. It would enhance effective library service and improve the standard of librarianship at a national and regional level. When established, the association needs to work closely with the Government and the institutions which have libraries in order to improve the standards of performance in libraries. Similarly, it needs to press the Government and the library funding authorities to support vast improvements in the amounts of money spent on libraries in areas of collection development, information service, facilities and staff salaries. It is the body that would speak for the librarians in matters of concern to them and should act as the watchdog and a lobby group to promote libraries, librarians and librarianship in the country.

5.6 Awareness & Publicity

As noted previously, only half of the 18 libraries surveyed had some form of awareness programmes to publicise their services. The other half felt that they lacked the resources to organise such programmes. As one librarian commented: "Promotional activities are

good when good library facilities are available, otherwise interested people will be disappointed."

In my opinion, this could be improved through co-operation and the formation of a library association. Libraries could co-operate to help each other to identify the type of activities which the libraries could use to promote their services within their own institutions. For instance, the qualified librarians with their expertise could give assistance to their untrained colleagues on how to produce library guides, put up promotional displays and so forth. Through a library association, promotional programmes could be carried out on a large scale, for instance, organising a National Book or National Library Week on a regular basis to promote the libraries, their services and librarianship as a profession.

Solomon Islands has a rich history and culture, and a unique set of values which are yet to be documented or packaged for publicity. This is a result of those in authority level not being able to recognise the importance of providing quality libraries in the country. In my opinion, one basic way by which those in authority can be convinced is through the single voice of a library association.

5.7 Funding

Much has already been said about the inadequacy of funds in the libraries for collection development, training, the introduction of new technology, promotional programmes and

the provision of library services in general. Section 4.4 in Chapter 4 provides a clear picture of the funding disparity among the libraries. It was found that most of the concerns raised by librarians were related to financial constraints. They revealed that the development of their libraries and service provision have suffered severely because of inadequate funds. This problem has been a major contributing factor to the low standard of libraries in Solomon Islands.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusions

6.1 General statement

The main aim of this research was to find out about the current state of libraries in Solomon Islands with particular attention to the resources they have and the services they provide. In doing so many interesting findings were uncovered, most notable are the problems which have led to a library system under-development in the country.

The major problems that face the libraries can be summarised as:

- insufficient library resources;
- a shortage of qualified librarians;
- insufficient funding;
- very little co-operation between libraries;
- a lack of understanding in the general community about what a library is really about;
- very little commitment towards libraries by the responsible authorities and the Government;
- an inability to reach, and therefore provide services for, the majority of the population.

Most of these problems are not unique to libraries in Solomon Islands, but are also shared by libraries in other developing countries. It should be added, by way of balance, that many of these problems are caused by geographic, economic, cultural and social factors over which there is little control. Despite these problems, libraries in Solomon Islands are developing rapidly.

The challenge facing the libraries over the first decade of the next millennium therefore is to provide the maximum improvement in the services despite an expected minimal increase in resources.

6.2 Specific conclusions

Across Solomon Islands, there is a wide variation in the quality of library and information services, the scope of collections, the standard of facilities and the quality of staff.

6.2.1 Resources

The current collections of resources, particularly in the public and school libraries, leave much to be desired. Many are dated, worn and unattractive. In most cases nothing much can be done as funds to develop the collections are very limited. As such, libraries need to explore other alternatives to supplement what they have. The scarcity of materials in the libraries would seem to indicate that co-operation between information units could result in economising over resources. Co-operation would lead to more efficient use of

the current scarce resources through interlibrary loans and equipment and facility sharing.

As for the three legal depository libraries, the collection of the publications covered under the Libraries (Deposit of Books) Act would greatly expand their holdings. Although there is the usual difficulty of collecting this material, it is very important that the three depository libraries start to work out a way to collect these useful publications so that they are readily accessible to the public.

6.2.2 Staff training

Solomon Islands is a developing country and, in common with many others, is desperately short of qualified librarians and the money needed to train more people. The increasing demand for library and information services has led to a greater demand for trained personnel. This problem is now starting to be addressed as more library workers are studying library courses locally through the USP University Extension Unit.

In view of the current shortage of qualified librarians there should be encouragement to study library courses. Those studying locally should be assisted with funding by their institutions. In addition, the Government should provide scholarships to librarians who have a first degree so that they can go abroad and obtain higher degrees in librarianship.

It is equally important that the major libraries, which have qualified staff, resources and facilities, should organise workshops and short training courses for the untrained staff of the libraries throughout the country.

6.2.3 Library co-operation

As there is currently very little co-operation between libraries in Solomon Islands, there is a need to develop and strengthen library co-operation amongst the libraries. There is no doubt that library co-operation and networking are accepted and desired methods of improving library services. There should therefore be an immediate identification and establishment of bibliographic and performance standards which would be agreed upon individually and collectively towards a national inter-library co-operation. As a result, co-operation would also lead to more efficient use of resources through:

- organisation of secondments, workshops and short training courses;
- personal co-operation between staff so that information and knowledge can be passed on as necessary;
- organisation of promotional activities such as National Book/Library Weeks.

6.2.4 Library Association

The urgent need to establish a library association in Solomon Islands cannot be over-emphasised. Despite attempts to form one in the past, for some reasons it has never materialised. In a call for the formation of a library association, a senior librarian remarked:

> It is now up to us to revisit the idea and give it a more serious consideration for the sake of library and library development in Solomon Islands. (Manerara 1999)

A Solomon Islands Library Association formed by the librarians would work towards strengthening the case of libraries in Solomon Islands. No doubt one of the main functions of this association would be to encourage the development of library education and training programmes to suit the needs of library personnel throughout the country.

6.2.5 Awareness raising and publicity

Publicity and public awareness raising on the importance and validity of the library/information services must be encouraged within the libraries and at a national level. The public should be educated more on the importance of having libraries. More emphasis should be placed on children's and school librarianship so that a greater awareness of the importance and functions of libraries would be fostered throughout the country, and also so that more people have some knowledge that the profession of librarianship exists. Furthermore, libraries should publicise existing services and facilities to both current and potential users.

Ultimately, in order to boost better library/information services to every community, the very few qualified librarians that now exist must lobby the appropriate authorities to recognise the values and significance of having good libraries and also to make those in authority recognise librarianship not only as a career but indeed a profession.

6.2.6 Technology

In the wake of the recent rapid advancements in information technology, the major libraries and those that could afford a computer should begin to think about the implications of the use of such technology.

6.2.7 Further research

It is believed that this research on the current state of libraries in Solomon Islands is a good starting point and it should be followed up with other research. As noted previously, there is a great paucity of work in this area and therefore a need for more in-depth study. As it is the first substantial piece of work in this area, it could provide a basis for further research.

6.3 Final statement

In conclusion , I believe that the above points are in effect useful as recommendations and if acted on would lead to an improvement in the standard of libraries and librarianship in Solomon Islands.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Survey Questionnaire

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. **Type of library** (Tick the appropriate answer)

❑ National library ❑ Public library

❑ Provincial public library ❑ Academic library (college/university library)

❑ School library ❑ Special library (please specify type)_____

❑ Research library (please specify type)_____

❑ Other (please specify) _____

1.1 Name of library _____

1.2 Name & type of parent institution_____

_____

2. **Budget**

2.1 Name of main source of funding for this library _____

2.1.2 Other sources (please list)_____

_____

2.2 Approx. annual operating budget $_____

2.2.1 Percentage spent on collection development _____ %

2.2.2 Percentage spent on salaries _____ %

3. Type of services provided

3.1 List the different services provided (e.g. reference, borrowing, interlibrary loan, etc.) _____

_____

_____

3.2. If yours is a public library, do you provide any children's services? (e.g. children's reading, story-telling, etc.)

❑ Yes ❑ No

3.2.1 If **yes**, please list them here: _____

_____

_____

3.3 Do you provide any form of Electronic Information Service at all? (e.g. OPAC or automated catalogue, automated management system, Internet, other network access.)

❑ Yes ❑ No

3.3.1 If **Yes**, list them here: _____

_____

_____

3.4 Do you provide photocopying for users?

❑ Yes ❑ No

3.5 Please add any further comments on the above: _____

_____

_____

4. Collection size, forms of materials

4.1 Total number of items in your collection _____

4.2 Forms of materials: (Tick **all** appropriate answers)

❑ Books ❑ Periodicals (newspapers, magazines)

❑ Audio visual (e.g. video cassettes, audio tapes, etc.)

Please specify type: _____

❑ Other (please specify): _____

4.3 List any special collection (e.g. SIC, reserve research collection for reference only, etc.)

_____

4.4 Please add any other comments: _____

_____

_____

5. Staffing

5.1 Total number of staff _____

5.1.2 Number of full-time staff _____
Number of part-time staff (if any) _____

5.2 Qualification of staff

How many have degree? In Library/Information _____
In another field _____

How many have a library/information diploma? _____
How many have library certificate? _____
How many have no qualification at all? _____
How many are currently undertaking training/studies? _____

5.3 Any training plans? (Please outline very briefly, possibly giving numbers) _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

6. **Clientele or users** (Tick all appropriate answers)

6.1 Type of users

❑ Public ❑ Students

❑ Researchers ❑ Employees of your organisation

❑ Other (please specify) _____

6.2 Number of borrowers currently registered for 1998? _____

6.2.3 For public or provincial libraries (if statistics are kept on ...)

- How many are adults? _____
- How many are young adults/teenagers? _____
- How many are children? _____

6.3 What is your average number of users per day? _____

6.4 What is the average number of items checked out (borrowed) per day?

_____

6.5 How many reference questions or queries would be received and handled on average per day? _____

7. Awareness & publicity

7.1 How are users made aware of library services? Any promotional programmes at all? If so, how regular?

7.2 At whom in particular are specific promotions aimed at? (e.g. special interest, new clients, non-library users, businesses, etc.)

8. Any further information? (Please add them below)

Appendix B: Letter to libraries notifying them of the survey

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC

Solomon Islands Centre

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN
30th June, 1998

RE: TONY DADALO - SURVEY OF SOLOMON ISLANDS LIBRARIES.

Tony Dadalo is the Librarian here at the USP Centre library. He is at present studying at Loughborough University in England for a Bachelors Degree in Information and Library Studies.

He is now in Solomon Islands to carry out research for a final year project and dissertation, for which he is doing a survey of Solomon Islands Libraries and their Resources. This will be a very useful piece of research to all who use libraries here. We have many libraries in Solomon Islands - general and specialist - but people are not always aware of what sorts of material they contain. If Tony's research can lead to a publication I am sure you will agree it will be very useful to students, academics, researchers, the government and others.

I hope you will be able to give full cooperation to Tony in this important piece of research.

Julian Treadaway
CENTRE DIRECTOR

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Appendix C: Covering letter for questionnaire sent by post

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC
Solomon Islands Centre

P.O. Box 460, Honiara, Solomon Islands
Telephone 21307 / 21308
Fax: (677) 21287

Our ref: Your ref:

SURVEY OF LIBRARIES AND THEIR RESOURCES IN SOLOMON ISLANDS.

1st July 1998

Dear Librarian,

My name is Tony Dadalo of USP Centre Library. I am studying Information & Library Studies at Loughborough University in the United Kingdom. For my final year project, I am carrying out research under the above title.

I am seeking to obtain information on the libraries of Solomon Islands with particular attention to information about the users of the libraries. I would be most grateful if you could help me by sparing a few minutes of your valuable time to complete this questionnaire and return it to me as soon as possible in the stamped envelope provided. Any reports or other documents you can let me have would be very welcome.

Thank you very much for your help.

Tony Dadalo

Appendix D: List of libraries that participated in the survey and their parent institutions or funding authorities

Library	Parent Institution/Funding authority
National	
Solomon Islands National Library Service.	Ministry of Education & Human Resources Development (MEHRD)
Academic	
SICHE Library Service	Ministry of Education & Human Res. Dev.
USP Solomon Islands Centre Library.	University of the South Pacific
Public/Provincial	
Buala Provincial Library	Isabel Provincial Assembly
Gizo Provincial Library	Western Provincial Assembly
Honiara Public Library	Honiara City Council
School	
Betikama Adventist High School Library.	Betikama Adventist High School
Ruavatu Secondary School Library	Ruavatu Secondary School
Selwyn College Secondary School Library.	Selwyn College Secondary School
St Joseph's Secondary School Library.	St Joseph's Tenaru Catholic Sec. School
Special	
CBSI Library	Central Bank of Solomon Islands
Central Hospital Library	Ministry of Health & Medical Services
FFA Library	Forum Fisheries Agency
High Court Library	High Court of Solomon Islands
Kohimarama Theological College Library.	Church of Melanesia
National Museum Library	Solomon Islands National Museum
Parliamentary Library	Solomon Islands National Parliament
Police Service Library	Royal Solomon Islands Police Service
SIBC Library	Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation
Solomon Telekom Training College Library.	Solomon Telekom Company Ltd